

REMARKS

I. Status of Claims

Claims 1- 33 are pending. Claims 1, 9, 15 and 28 are independent.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 6, 13, 22, 26, 27, 32 and 33 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner hold rewriting claims 6, 13, 22, 26, 27, 32 and 33 in abeyance until the rejection of the parent claims 1, 9, 15, 23 and 28 have been reconsidered.

III. Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14-16, 19, 20, 23-25, 28, 30 and 31 as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. 5,465,304 by *Cullen* in view of U.S. Pat. App. No. 2004/0161151 by *Iwayama* and US Pat. 3,701,972 by *Berkekey*. However, since the priority date (September 11, 2002) of the present application is earlier than the U.S. filing date (January 28, 2003) of *Iwayama*, *Iwayama* does not appear to be prior art, and the rejection is improper. The claim for priority of the current application was acknowledged in the office action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14-16, 19, 20, 23-25, 28, 30 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 be withdrawn.

Claims 3, 11 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Cullen* in view of *Iwayama* and *Berkekey* further in view of U.S. Pat. App. No. 2004/0120598 by *Feng*. Also, *Feng* does not qualify as prior art because it was filed on December 18, 2002, after the priority date of the present application. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejections under *Feng*.

Claims 4, 12 and 18 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Cullen* in view of *Iwayama* and *Berkekey* further in view of U.S. Pat. 4,180,798 by *Komori*. However, as discussed above, *Iwayama* is not prior art.

Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Cullen* in view of *Iwayama* and *Berkekey* further in view of U.S. Pat. No. 4,799,077 by *Kaplan*. However, as discussed above, *Iwayama* is not prior art.

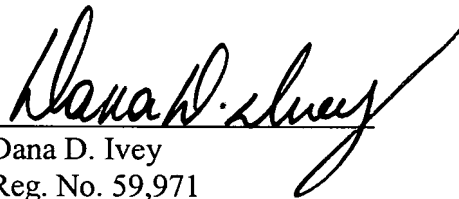
Claim 29 also stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Cullen* in view of *Iwayama* and *Berkekey* further in view of U.S. Pat. App. 2002/0165803 by *Iwase*. However, *Iwayama* is not prior art.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the above, it is believed that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, and notice to that effect is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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